

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 0380

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, BQG, WB, UR
SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS THAT SOVIETS HAVE RETURNED CREDENTIALS OF
AUSTRALIAN HEAD OF MILITARY MISSION INBERLIN

1. WELT AND MORGENPOST FOR FEBRUARY 15 CARRIED STORIES THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV HAD RETURNED CREDENTIALS OF AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR LOVEDAY TO FRG AS HEAD OF AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MISSION IN BERLIN, FYI - AUSTRALIA MAINTAINS NO RESIDENT STAFF IN WEST BERLIN SAVE ONE EMPLOYEE TO ANSWER INQUIRIES MAINLY CONCERNING EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA. OFFICER IN QUESTION, ONE MRS. PULIVER, REFERS ANY SUBSTANTIVE BUSINESS TO AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, BONN.
2. AMBASSADOR LOVEDAY PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS IN CUSTOMARY CEREMONIES AT ACA BUILDING IN AMERICAN SECTOR ON JANUARY 25. COPIES OF HIS CREDENTIALS WOULD NORMALLY BE PASSED TO SOVIET EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN, BUT THIS HAS NOT REPEAT NOT YET BEEN DONE.
3. FRENCH MISSION HAS RESPONSIBILITY AMONG THE THREE ALLIES FOR CONSERVATION OF ORIGINAL COPIES OF CREDENTIALS AND FRENCH PROTOCOL OFFICER, MR. SYRIGOS, A VETERAN OF 32 YEARS SERVICE IN BERLIN, THEREFORE CIRCULATES COPIES OF THE CREDENTIALS TO HIS BRITISH, AMERICAN AND SOVIET

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COLLEAGUES. COMMENT: SYRIGOS DOES NOT ALWAYS DO THIS
IN VERY PROMPT FASHION. END COMMENT.

4. FOR EXAMPLE, ON JANUARY 14, WHEN OTHER BUSINESS TOOK HIM TO SOVIET EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN, SHRIGOS PERSONALLY HANDED OVER WITHOUT REPEAT WITHOUT ANY COVERING LETTER, COPIES OF CREDENTIALS PRESENTED BY NORWEGIAN,

SOUTH AFRICAN AND LUXEMBOURG HEADS OF MILITARY MISSION. THE FIRST TWO OF THESE CEREMONIES HAD BEEN IN SEPTEMBER, 1977, WHILE LUXEMBOURG AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN FORMALLY RECEIVED ON JANUARY 17, 1978. SYRIGOS REPORTS THAT SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY TYUTYUNOV AT FIRST REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE SOUTH AFRICAN CREDENTIALS (APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF THE REGIME'S RACIAL POLICIES) FOR REASONS WHICH HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH BERLIN. TYUTYUNOV WAS FINALLY SWAYED BY ARGUMENT THAT SOVIETS HAD JOINED IN THE INVITATION TO SOUTH AFRICA TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY MISSION IN BERLIN AND THUS SHOULD NOT REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE CREDENTIALS OF THE NEW SOUTH AFRICAN HEAD, AMBASSADOR VON SCHIRNDING. TYUTYUNOV TOOK THE OCCASION HOWEVER TO DELIVER AN OBITER DICTA THAT FOR A CHIEF OF MILITARY MISSION TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AS AMBASSADOR TO BONN REPRESENTED "A NEW EFFORT BY THE FRG TO ALTER (POERTER ATTEINTE AU) THE STATUS OF BERLIN." AS FAR AS WE KNOW, SYRIGOS MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE REPLY TO THIS REMARK.

5. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, BONN MAY HAVE SENT A COPY OF AMBASSADOR LOVEDAY'S CREDENTIALS TO SOVIET EMBASSY, EAST BERLIN SINCE CHECKS WITH BRITISH AND FRENCH MISSIONS HERE CONFIRM THAT NO ONE IN WEST BERLIN HAS YET FORWARDED CREDENTIALS TO SOVIETS. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO EXPLORE WITH AUSTRALIANS IN BONN AS TO WHAT ACTUALLY HAS HAPPENED. WE WOULD NATURALLY
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BE GRATEFUL TO RECEIVE A COPY OF ANY LETTER OR STATEMENT THE SOVIETS MADE IN RETUUNING LOVEDAY'S CREDENTIALS.

6. FRENCH MISSION HERE SPECULATES THAT EPISODE CONCERNING SOUTH AFRICAN CREDENTIALS MAY HAVE BECOME KNOWN TO PRESS BUT IN GARBLED FASHION WHICH LED PRESS TO ATTRIBUTE AFFAIR TO AUSTRALIA RATHER THAN SOUTH AFRICA. THIS STRIKES US AS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE.

7. TAGESSPIEGEL ON JANUARY 16 CARRIED BRIEF ITEM QUOTING "ALLIED SPOKESMAN" WHO SAID THAT THESE MATTERS WERE CONCERNS OF THE WESTERN ALLIES BUT NOTED THAT NO CONTACTS HAD TAKEN PLACE WITH THE SOVIETS REGARDING AMBASSADOR LOVEDAY.

8. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE PRESS QUERIES ON THIS SUBJECT AND GIVEN ITS LACK OF REAL SENSITIVITY WOULD BE INCLINED TO TELL THE PRESS THAT SINCE THE SOVIET UNION ALONG WITH THE THREE WESTERN POWERS INVITED DIFFERENCT COUNTRIES TO SEND MILITARY MISSIONS TO BERLIN, WE HAVE AS NORMAL PRACTICES SENT THE SOVIET EMBASSY THE LETTERS OF CREDENTIALS OF THE NEW CHIEFS OF MILITARY MISSION. HOWEVER,

WE HAVE NOT DONE SO YET WITH RESPECT TO AUSTRALIAN
AMBASSADOR LOVEDAY. THIS KIND OF STATEMENT WOULD IN
OUR VIEW RESOLVE THE PRESS CONFUSION ON THE SUBJECT;
AT LEAST HERE IN BERLIN, THE FRENCH ARE THINKING ALONG
THE SAME LINES. GEORGE

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